

Regional AGENDA

METROPOLITAN KING COUNTY COUNCIL

May-June 2000

High-speed Internet access available to all unincorporated areas by end of year



Utilities and Technology committee chair, David Irons (right) and committee vice chair, Jane Hague (left) announce recommended changes to high-speed cable service in unincorporated King County.

High-speed Internet service via cable is moving quickly into the unincorporated areas of King County.

Just two days after the council unanimously voted to allow AT&T to assume the transfer for the franchise, service offers were being delivered to approximately 13,000 homes in east and south King County. The service will continue to be expanded, and by the end of this year should be available in all unincorporated areas.

"It took more than a year, but I'm glad the council took the time to do this right," said Councilmember Jane Hague. "Now that the agreement is inked, service is rolling out. We could have very easily ended up in court instead, with service still years away."

The council's vote on May 15 ended more than a year of negotiations between King County and AT&T concerning service to the 400,000-plus residents living in unincorporated areas of the county.

The agreement outlines a two-year conditional
Continued on page 2

Council successfully lobbies for state funding

After extending its session by weeks to hammer out details of this year's budget, the state Legislature finally reached a consensus in late April on how exactly it would help cities, counties and local transit agencies respond to the gaps left by Initiative 695.

When voters approved the reduction of the Motor Vehicle Excise Tax (MVET) last November, both the state and local govern-

ment were left searching for ways to replace the dedicated funding the MVET revenues provided for public health, criminal justice, roads and transit.

"I was very impressed by how our local legislators fought for the people of King

Continued on page 5



Councilmember Dwight Pelz

Metropolitan King County Council • Room 1200 King County Courthouse • 516 Third Avenue, Seattle, WA 98104-3272

District 1	Maggi Fimia	296-1001	District 6	Rob McKenna	296-1006	District 11	Jane Hague	296-1011
District 2	Cynthia Sullivan	296-1002	District 7	Pete von Reichbauer	296-1007	District 12	David Irons	296-1012
District 3	Louise Miller	296-1003	District 8	Greg Nickels	296-1008	District 13	Chris Vance	296-1013
District 4	Larry Phillips	296-1004	District 9	Kent Pullen	296-1009	General Phone		296-1000
District 5	Dwight Pelz	296-1005	District 10	Larry Gossett	296-1010	TTY / TDD		296-1024

High-speed Internet access available to all unincorporated areas by end of year

approval process for the transfer of control of the TCI cable franchise in unincorporated King County to AT&T. In addition to providing cable television service, AT&T also offers high-speed Internet access on its broadband network.

“This agreement gives our residents a guarantee from AT&T that high-speed Internet service will be available by Dec. 31, 2000,” said Councilmember David Irons, chair of the Utilities and Technology Committee. “In addition, they are also promised a capped price with the ability to receive any promotions being offered by the company nationwide.”

The final agreement has been endorsed by the council, the county executive, AT&T and even consumer groups seeking maximum access to high-speed Internet services.

The council had sought a balanced approach that would provide citizens with immediate access to the high-speed Internet service, while taking market demands for fairness and access into account. Under the measure, citizens who sign up for the AT&T service will have a choice of Internet service providers.

In addition, the measure gives the county flexibility to require AT&T to provide full open access pending court decisions in other parts of the country, or when a certain level of the market share in King County has been reached.

“Other jurisdictions that rushed ahead with a hard-line decision are now facing lengthy battles in court against AT&T,” said Hague. “And there were some governments that seemed to open the door to one particular company without any protections for consumers. I think King County has achieved a much better balance.”

County officials promised to aggressively monitor compliance with the new franchise requirements.

“All along, we’ve said the consumer should come first,” said Irons, “and I think this agreement accomplishes that.”

continued from page one

Provisions of the agreement with AT&T include:

- Providing unincorporated-area residents with high-speed cable service;
- Setting a price cap for the service at \$39.95 through June 2002, and ensure that residents receive reduced rates that AT&T promotes elsewhere in the country;
- Creating an Expert Monitoring Panel (EMP), designed to monitor the service. The EMP will monitor whether the company is becoming a monopoly in the cable/Internet market. The council will have the ability to impose further requirements on AT&T should the panel see any anti-competitive or monopolistic behavior; and,
- Creating a Cable Services Advisory Committee (CSAC), designed to provide citizens with a forum to discuss all service issues related to cable and Internet. The CSAC would consist of two citizen members from King County Council districts 3, 5, 8, 9, and 12

“All along, we’ve said the consumer should come first,” said Irons, “and I think this agreement accomplishes that.”



In Pictures..

Ron Judd, former Executive Secretary of the King County Labor Council is recognized for his achievements by (left to right): Councilmember Dwight Pelz, County Executive Ron Sims, Councilmembers Kent Pullen, Cynthia Sullivan, Council Chair Pete von Reichbauer, Judd, Councilmembers Larry Phillips, Maggi Fimia and David Irons.

Bus tunnel key link in Sound Transit network

King County, the City of Seattle and Sound Transit have arrived at an agreement that will transfer the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel for use by the new regional light rail system.

By a vote of 10-2, the council decided on May 22 to transfer the tunnel to Sound Transit in return for cash and property worth \$195.6 million, the full value of the tunnel.

“We negotiated a good deal that benefits the people of King County in many ways,” said Councilmember Chris Vance, chair of the Transportation Committee. “We reached an agreement that will serve the future riders of Sound Transit, and it also fully compensates the taxpayers who are paying for the original construction costs of the tunnel.”

The tunnel, which runs primarily under Third Avenue in Seattle, was originally constructed to remove buses from downtown streets and increase transit ridership with another “street” below the surface.

It opened in September 1990 at a cost of \$480 million, and was built with the expectation that it could be converted in the future into light rail.

“The downtown tunnel was the first phase of a rail line,” said Councilmember Maggi Fimia, chair of the Regional Transit Committee. “This agreement helps realize that, while recognizing that the bus system has to be made whole.”

Once transferred to Sound Transit, the tunnel will be closed from September 2004 until the fall of 2006, when it will reopen as a light rail facility. The city of Seattle has agreed to make surface street improvements that will assist in

moving buses through downtown Seattle during the tunnel closure.

“Ten years ago, the downtown Seattle transit tunnel was a visionary investment in the future,” said Councilmember Greg Nickels, a member of the Sound Transit Board. “With this agreement, that investment will be fully realized and opens up a new future for transportation in the Puget Sound region.”

The two councilmembers who voted against the proposal said it will only add to congestion at taxpayer expense.

Councilmembers Rob McKenna and Kent Pullen said the transfer of the tunnel means bus riders from outlying areas will lose an easy connection to downtown employment areas, while the region invests in a financially risky light rail system.

Pullen noted that displacement of the buses from the tunnel onto surface streets will be “very chaotic” and will greatly increase the traffic congestion in downtown Seattle.

McKenna also renewed his criticism of Sound Transit’s \$2 billion light rail plan.

“We can carry more people in the tunnel on buses than will ride light rail, and the rail will generate relatively few new transit users,” said McKenna. “Plus, the budget has already gone up \$400 million before any construction has begun.”



Councilmembers Chris Vance (left) and Greg Nickels (center right) are joined by County Executive Ron Sims (right) and Sound Transit Chair Dave Earling (center left) to discuss using the bus tunnel for light rail.

Council takes committee to the community

In the continuing effort to make a direct connection with citizens, two of the county council’s Committee-of-the-Whole meetings will be held out in the community, away from the downtown Seattle courthouse. Scheduled for June 19th and July 17th, the meetings outside of the courthouse allow citizens the opportunity to establish one-on-one dialogue with councilmembers about common issues.

The Committee-of-the-Whole meeting to be held on June 19th is scheduled to take place at the First African-American Methodist Episcopal Church in Seattle, also known as the First

AME Church. The church is located at 1522 14th Avenue in Seattle. The meeting will begin at 9 a.m. and the focus will be on youth at risk.

The Committee-of-the-Whole meeting to be held on July 17th is scheduled to take place at the King County Fairgrounds in Enumclaw. The King County Fair runs from July 18-23, 2000.

If your community would like to host the Committee-of-the-Whole, please contact council staffers Mike Alvine at (206) 296-0350 or Nancy Laswell at (206) 296-0345.

Mental Health Initiative seeks to improve patient care

Councilmember Kent Pullen has recently introduced legislation that focuses on helping people become less dependent on the county's publicly funded mental health system.

Pullen's goal is to improve customer services for people using county mental health services. He is concerned that the system is overloaded and needs better goals, definitive performance measurements, and improved accountability.

Statistics recently presented to the council seem to back that up. In 2000, King County taxpayers will spend \$90 million to serve approximately 28,000 people through county mental health services.

"Presently, the county only has a safety-net system," said Pullen. "That kind of approach does intercede to get mentally ill people off the streets and can help clients who are in a serious crisis, but it can also create a revolving door of treatment with no hope of wellness."

"We need to lay the foundation for methods that will move away from the 'shock, sedate and restrain' methodology, to an approach that will actually make the mentally ill well."

Pullen's ideas are being supported here at home by many mental health professionals who are working with him to establish a progression of goals toward recovery and wellness. But he also has an ally in Holly-

wood.

In April, actress Margot Kidder – best known as Lois Lane in the "Superman" movies – traveled to Seattle to testify before the council's Management, Labor and Customer Services Committee.

"Margot Kidder has become a renowned leader crusading for the mentally ill," said Pullen. "I wanted the committee to hear what she has to say about improving services for those in need, so that we can help a larger number of patients function free of disabilities."

Kidder has been open about her own experiences as a patient who was diagnosed as a manic-depressive. A little more than three years ago, Kidder made headlines when she successfully sought alternative treatment for her condition and became well.

Since that time, Kidder has worked on her own wellness and speaks out for others on the need to have realistic treatment goals for the mentally ill that include dignity, compassion and non-drug alternatives.

"King County needs to strive to create a mental health system that has a goal of making people well," said Pullen. "Margot Kidder had a lot to say about improving services for those in need. It becomes much more meaningful when you hear this advice from someone who has been both helped and harmed by current mental health practices in this country."



Councilmember Kent Pullen (left) and actress Margot Kidder review pending legislation.



Councilmember Chris Vance (right) and County Executive Ron Sims (far left) accept a \$2,000 grant from Denny Lensegraver (center) of Puget Sound Energy to help restore Des Moines Memorial Drive.



Councilmembers Jane Hague (left), Larry Phillips (center left) and Council Chair Pete von Reichbauer (right) recognize volunteer Valerie Moore during National County Government Week.

In Pictures...

Council lobbies for state funding

continued from page one

County down in Olympia, especially on the transit issues,” said Councilmember Dwight Pelz, the chair of the county council’s Legislative Steering Committee.

Approximately 90 percent of public health funding was restored. A little more than 50 percent of the MVET revenues for criminal justice were replaced, and funds were found for about two-thirds of the Referendum 49 transportation list approved the last year’s legislature.

In all three cases, it appears to be a one-time appropriation.

“This funding is described as ongoing funding, but it is not connected to a revenue source like the previous MVET,” said Pelz. “This means we will have to continue to lobby these dollars every legislative session in the future.”

The state gave transit agencies a one-time payment of \$80 million – roughly one-third of what they are losing in one year. After that, the agencies are on their own. But, lawmakers did give the transit agencies permission to ask voters to raise their local sales tax to as much as 0.9 percent, up from the current .06 percent.

“We are extremely grateful that the legislature worked so hard to fill the holes created by I-695,” said Louise Miller, council vice chair and former state legislator.

Council extends popular arbitration program

King County’s well-received mandatory arbitration program will continue to resolve disputes over the next several months, following the county council’s approval of more than \$280,000 in supplemental funding.

The program offers people an opportunity to resolve disputes involving smaller civil claims without having to go to court. Arbitration is less expensive and faster for both parties, as well as the court system.

However, following passage of Initiative 695, the program was slated to be phased out after April 1 of this year. But the funding recently approved by the council will be enough to arbitrate cases over the next several months.

“The mandatory arbitration program is a valuable tool in expediting claims originally noted for trial,” said Councilwoman Cynthia Sullivan, co-sponsor of the funding measure. “It also provides a cost-effective forum to resolve disputes and helps lessen an already crowded court docket.”

In addition, the council approved a measure, which would implement a \$120 user fee for each case, allowing the program to fund itself in the future. This was made possible thanks to recent changes in state law.

“The budget committee took every step possible last year to keep the arbitration program running,” said Councilmember Greg Nickels, who co-chaired the budget committee during last year’s budget process. “Since then, the county was successful in lobbying the Legislature for the changes we needed to make this program self-supporting.”

Each year, the arbitration program handles approximately half of all civil, non-domestic cases noted for trial in King County. In addition, nearly 60 percent of cases referred to arbitration settle prior to their first hearing. Cases typically take about four months to go through the arbitration process. In contrast, jury trials take an average of more than two years to complete and can be very costly for the county.

“This is money well spent,” added Councilmember Rob McKenna, chair of the Budget and Fiscal Management Committee. “King County will save money in the long term by avoiding lengthy, expensive litigation.”

Seattle's Ravenna Creek to be "daylighted" under new joint plan

King County Councilwoman Cynthia Sullivan and Seattle City Councilmember Richard Conlin recently announced the plan to daylight Ravenna Creek.

The daylighting plan, accomplished after years of hard work and negotiations, will bring portions of Ravenna Creek to the surface in Seattle's Cowen Park and in the south end of Ravenna Park. The creek will then flow through a pipe to Union Bay. Currently, the creek runs through a pipe from the park all the way to the West Point Sewage Treatment Plant. The City of Seattle will work with area residents during construction, and will maintain the daylighted portion of the creek through Ravenna Park.

"Cowen and Ravenna Parks are an incredible natural resource in the midst of some of Seattle's most populous neighborhoods," said Sullivan. "The daylighting of Ravenna Creek is a great addition to these parks and I am grateful that the city, King County, and the Ravenna Creek Alliance have been able to come to this agreement."

The work on Ravenna Creek also fulfills a high priority of the University Community Urban

Center Neighborhood Plan, another step in implementing neighborhood plans in Seattle.

In addition to daylighting a small portion of the creek, the county and city have agreed to commission and maintain artwork along the former route of the creek outside of the park. The artwork will represent a "spiritual and symbolic" connection between the park and Union Bay. Also, under the agreement, there is a possibility of daylighting a portion of the creek in Cowen Park as well as where the pipe connects to University Slough on the University of Washington property south of NE 45th Street.

Both the county and city agreed that daylighting the entire creek was not a feasible option at this time. King County has already allocated \$3.2 million for the daylighting project and artwork. The city's proposed parks funding levy, scheduled for the ballot this fall, would help fund the design of the creek as it runs through the park. The creek route would accommodate current athletic field uses in the park. Construction is set to begin in 2003.

County gravel pit to become a Newcastle park

What do you do with a gravel pit, once all the gravel has been removed? King County is selling one they have owned for forty-five years to the city of Newcastle, which will become a new recreational park.

The Metropolitan King County Council recently approved the sale of 6.75 acres of surplus county property to the city of Newcastle to be developed as an active-recreation park. Newcastle will be purchasing the "Hillman" property, which was obtained by the county in 1955 for the county roads division to use as a gravel pit. Most of the gravel has since been removed, and the roads division no longer needs the property.

The city of Newcastle will pay \$100,000 for the property, which is located on the north and south

sides of the 12800 block of Southeast 95th Way, west of Coal Creek Parkway. Newcastle has also purchased adjoining property from the state of Washington, and plans to develop a park with ballfields, a walking path, open space areas, and other amenities.

"This is a win-win situation for both county and city residents," said King County Councilmember Rob McKenna who represents much of the Newcastle area. "King County will be paid for a piece of surplus property it no longer needs, and Newcastle will gain a wonderful site for a park to be built. I am proud that King County can assist Newcastle in making this dream come true. There has been a real shortage of parks for use by local families and sports enthusiasts. This is a very worthy project."

County council approves landmark program to improve child care

Last fall, King County became the first in the nation to pass legislation aimed at improving the wages of childcare workers. The Metropolitan King County Council recently took the next step as it approved a budget, standards and guidelines for a pilot project to carry out the goals of that legislation.

“Our major goal is to increase the quality of child care available to our working families,” said Councilmember Greg Nickels, chair of the Law, Justice and Human Services Committee. “We need to be able to attract – and keep – quality people in this profession and provide them with professional development opportunities. Our children’s well-being depends on it.”

The program approved by the council will target childcare providers who serve low-income families in south King County and rural east King County. It will provide wage subsidies for participating providers, and provide incentives for the continuing education of child care workers.

Councilmember Louise Miller, who supported the measure, said research shows that in addition to improved wages, training is another key element for the retention of child care workers.

“The more training and education provided to our child care workers, the more we’ll see services that enhance all children’s social and educational development,” said Miller. “This additional training will help to retain these skilled workers and provide permanent career opportunities in child care.”

The pilot is designed to operate for five years. During that time, a research program will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of this approach.

“This pilot has been designed in consultation with child care teachers, program directors, advocates, instructors, labor groups and health professionals,” said Nickels. “We wanted a diverse perspective on the best childcare methods that would both encourage the healthy development of children and support the economic stability of families in King County.”

Three Forks plan protects amazing natural area

The county council recently took steps to preserve 418 acres along the Snoqualmie River.

The land was purchased for preservation by the county with funds from the 1989 Open Space and Parks Bond. The council voted May 15th on a master plan to turn Three Forks into a passive park with limited public use. The first priority will be nine projects totaling \$978,000 that emphasize protecting the natural environment, including habitat improvements, trail development and new parking.

The final vote was 7-6, because there was some disagreement on the details in the master plan.

“We want to proceed carefully with this incredible piece of land, because it truly is a treasure,” said Councilmember David Irons, who represents the Three Forks area, which is located between North Bend and Snoqualmie.

Councilmember Larry Phillips and other councilmembers had hoped to increase the amount of new trails, parking and other amenities to make it easier for people living outside the immediate area to use the park.

“Taxpayers should be disappointed we didn’t take steps to make this park more accessible for all the people who paid for it,” said Phillips, who chairs the Natural Resources, Parks and Open Space Committee. “But our disagreement was never over preserving this wonderful natural area. That much we have achieved.”

The master plan approved for the Three Forks Natural Area prioritizes protecting water quality and wildlife habitat at the confluence of the of the north, middle and south forks of the Snoqualmie River. The area serves as a corridor for several species of wildlife, including black bear, elk, cougar, deer, eagle and river otter.

Most of the trails and public access points recommended for limited development are on the north side of the river, along Reinig Road. The south side of the river will be designated a special management area with both habitat preservation zones and agricultural fields.



The Three Forks area, located between North Bend and Snoqualmie includes 418 acres along the Snoqualmie River.

Council honors outstanding high school graduates

The Metropolitan King County Council honored almost 200 top graduating high school seniors from around the county at the 15th Annual Student Scholar Celebration on Wednesday evening, May 17th at the Museum of Flight.

All high school seniors in King County from both public and private high schools, carrying a 4.0 accumulative grade point average, or those in the top one percent of their graduating class were invited to the event and given an honorary certificate of accomplishment. Students from all thirteen County Council districts were represented at the event, and most were accompanied by their parents.

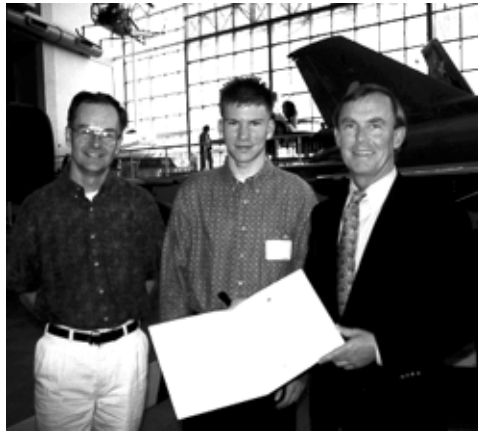
“These young people represent the future of our community,” said Council Chair Pete von Reichbauer. “It is important to recognize and honor the tremendous accomplishments achieved by these students during their high school careers.”



Azizah Abdol (right) from Franklin High School was congratulated by Franklin High School alumni Councilmember Larry Gossett (center).



Councilmember Maggi Fimia (center right) recognizes graduating senior Breanne Fortun (center left) from Inglemoor High School for her outstanding scholastic achievements.



Paul Larpenteur (center) from Decatur High School discusses his plans after graduating from high school with Council Chair Pete von Reichbauer (right).

The information in this newsletter is available in alternate format upon request. Alternate format includes braille, large print, and/or audio. For more information, please call 296-0360, or TDD/TTY at 296-1024.

Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
PAID
Seattle, WA
Permit No. 1788

Metropolitan King County Council
Room 1200, King County Courthouse
516 Third Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104-3272

Address Service Requested

AGENDA
King County